

Time to Go

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Summary: Their time was over, and there was nothing left to do but go.

Time to Go

**\*\*AN:\*\*** My second HtTYD fanfic! This one is sad though. :( I hope you enjoy it anyway!

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** I do not own How to Train Your Dragon. Dreamworks does.

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><p>Hiccup was dying.<p>

Old as he was, this was no surprise, for it had been a long, long time since a Viking had lost their life to something other than age or illness. He had lived a good, long life, had been perhaps the best chief Berk could have ever hoped for, and he was leaving behind him a legacy like no other.

But even this knowledge did nothing to sooth the pain within Astrid's heart.

Of course, for the people that had gathered along the beach today at Hiccup's request, death was no stranger. All of them had lost loved ones at one time or another, either from the Great Dragon Wars that were not so long forgotten that the memories of them were now only clearest in books or from the peace that had prevailed directly afterwards, a few harsh years where food had been scarce, tempers short, and weapons always ready at hand. Many were mothers or fathers that had seen at least one child wither from the sickness that had swept their island almost thirty years ago, killing dozens before a cure could be found, or lovers that had been forced to watch their beloved die before their time for many various reasons. They were

Vikings, and death was just one of their many occupational hazards.

Knowing this didn't make the times they were forced to face it any easier.

A gasp tore her gaze away from the gently rolling ocean, forcing her to face the dirt path that each of them had taken just a few minutes earlier to reach this place from Berk. Unsurprisingly, though the sight filled her with concern, Astrid had almost been expecting the two figures that were now slowly making their way towards the gathering, their every step slow and almost anguished.

Of the two, Toothless was still the larger, though it seemed almost as if he had shrunk during the old age that had also come to affect him after a time. His once pure black scales, the reason for his species' name, had gained a greyish tint as time had gone by, leaving him looking more and more like a stone than a piece of the night. His skin, much like a human's, had become wrinkled and swollen, hanging in folds from the thick appendages that had once been mighty and muscled. His tail dragged listlessly upon the ground, and even from a distance she could see his tongue lolling from his now completely toothless mouth, telling just how hard the short journey had been on the dragon.

It had been years since the creature had had the strength to fly.

Besides him, Hiccup seemed even smaller than he had once been, his body stooped and leaning from the pain and weight life had left upon him. With almost all his weight placed upon the metal foot that old Gobber had made for him so long ago, now the better of his two limbs, the weariness within his face was clear to his observers, readable signs of just how long he had been alive. With his own skin waxen and wrinkled, also containing large folds that drooped from his meatless bones, the two of them were quite a sight.

Even after seventy years of friendship, they still matched in almost every which way.

Watching as they finally reached the sandy shore, it was only with the strongest of wills that Astrid was able to keep herself from going to his side, from using the last, lingering bits of strength she herself had to keep him from falling, though it was clear that he was doing that exact same job for himself, by himself. Silently, the crowd parted and watched as the two, the first Rider and Dragon, made their way down the pathway they had cut for him down the beach, their heads held high even as their limbs trembled. Reaching the edge of the water, its cold fingers just inches away from their feet, Hiccup and Toothless finally allowed their stumbling pace to falter and stop, turning their bodies so that they were facing all who had gathered. Looking out at them, his eyes glazed and clouded with age, it still didn't stop him from finding her face, a grin growing upon his own as he recognized her. Smiling brightly, Hiccup raised an arm to call for an already present silence and began to speak.

"My friends," Hiccup began softly, his eyes picking out every familiar face to be examined and held dear for one last time, "it is time for me to go." Immediately, a roar began from the crowd as the people of Berk refused to accept his words, denying that he had just

spoken at all and that they were still waiting for him to say what he had truly gathered them here to say. Waiting until the noise had died down, it was with a fond smile that Hiccup continued, his voice slightly louder, but not by much.

"My friends, it is time for me to go. I am weak, I am old, and it is time for my reign as chief to end, and for a new one to begin. Because of this, I ask that my oldest son, named for his grandfather, Stoick, step forward." Almost as if he was in a daze, the middle-aged man that had been standing besides her stepped forward so that he was towering over his father. Much like his grandfather before him, this new Stoick had been born large and had just kept getting larger, though his head had actually been used over the man's life, his sharp wit and eager mind combining with his great strength and size to create an imposing character. But even with though he struck fear into his enemies' hearts, never once had this Stoick raised a hand against anyone, preferring to keep the peace his own father had strived so hard to create.

Even if he himself didn't believe it, Stoick Haddock II would be a good chief.

"Please," Hiccup was saying, "give him the support you have always shown me, for it has only been because you have been willing to follow my lead that life has been so peaceful for us these last few decades. It would pain me sorely to see that peace broken after my death." His words were elegant as he spoke, more formal in style than she had ever heard him use before, but for this moment, as he bestowed his blessing upon his eldest son, one his own father had died before giving to him, it was necessary and needed.

Gods, how she wished things could be different.

Slowly, one by one, the villagers of Berk made their way towards him, shaking his hand and wishing him well on the journey he was soon to have, all agreeing that the gods in Valhalla would be lucky to have him. Many mothers asked for his blessing for their youngest, newborn children, while many sons took this last opportunity to ask for a blessing to marry one maiden or another, their hearts sent, if not having Hiccup perform the ceremony himself, on at least having him approve their plans for the future. These he did with a smile, performing the last duties he could to the people he was to leave behind, for it was all the comfort he could offer them.

Although he had begun at noon, it was almost sunset before the last of the villagers had begun their journey back to Berk, finally leaving the three of them alone.

"Astrid, come here."

Although spoken like a command, there was no demand with Hiccup's voice as he held out his hand for her take, an appendage she quickly and strongly grasped onto. Already she could feel their bodies shaking, his from weakness, hers from the emotions that she refused to allow to be seen. Without a single word, they found themselves wrapped in each other's arms, their sixty-nine years together making speech an unnecessary requirement for communication. Just standing there, holding each other, feeling the other's breath on their skin and hearing their faltering heartbeats in their ears, was more than enough to make their feelings known.

"I love you Astrid," Hiccup whispered, his voice almost inaudible as he held on the best he could to the last of his strength. "'I've loved you since the first day we met, and I'll love you until Ragnarok destroys the world and ends my soul. Even then, a part of me will still love you."

Without saying a word, her throat suddenly clogged by the tears that threatened to fall from her eyes, Astrid just cupped his face between her hands and kissed him, pouring everything she had into that one, simple motion.

Pulling away, his breathing ragged and strained, Hiccup placed one last kiss upon her forehead before turning away, his awkward, stumbling steps taking him to Toothless' side. Fumbling with the straps, Hiccup slowly, agonizingly pulled himself into the saddle, foregoing the many safety measures he had added over the years for one last chance at freedom. Slipping his metal foot into the stirrup, an old, creaking rustle of leather and metal long since unused reached their ears as the man-made part of Toothless' tail began to move, finally being used after years of neglect. Almost without warning, with just a slight touch of Hiccup's hand upon his neck, Toothless shot into the air, a fierce cry leaving the dragon's mouth as he flew once again.

For a long while Astrid stood froze on the beach, uncaring as the icy trendles of the ocean caught and pulled at her dress. Her eyes remained fixed upon the slowly shrinking figure that was her husband and his best friend as they flew farther and farther out to sea, following the sunset that they both had loved so much. It wasn't until dark had almost fallen that she allowed herself to finally leave, turning her back on the sea for one last time.

Allowing the tears to finally fall, even as she shook her head to clear it of the image, nothing Astrid could do would erase the sight of the blurred figure falling into the ocean, or remove the final strong, young laugh that had reached her ears as it did.

The only thing that could comfort her was that fact that the one true love of her life, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, was dead, and that she herself would soon join him.

End  
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